

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 LAGOS 08630 081026Z

53

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 PC-01

IO-10 /063 W

----- 006827

R 041521Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1029

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMCONSUL KADUNA

AMCONSUL IBADAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LAGOS 8630

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, NI

SUBJECT: FMG MOVES TO CONTROL PRESS: TAKEOVER TWO
LARGEST DAILIES

REF: LAGOS 8249 AND 8477

SUMMARY: HARD ON HEELS FMG WARNING TO PRESS TO EXERCISE
RESTRAINT IN ITS CRITICISM, NEW GOVERNMENT, IN CHARACTERISTIC
RAPID AND DECISIVE FASHION OVER AUGUST 31 WEEKEND, ANNOUNCED
ACQUISITION CONTROL NIGERIA'S TWO LEADING DAILY NEWSPAPER
ORGANIZATIONS; DAILY TIMES OF NIGERIA, LTD. AND THE NEW NIGERIAN,
LTD. END SUMMARY.

1. REFERRING BACK TO HIS COMMENTS AUG. 22 PRESS CONFERENCE,
CHIEF OF STAFF BRIG. OBADANJO ISSUED STATEMENT AUG. 29
WARNING PRESS FMG WOULD NOT "CONDONE INDISCIPLINE." WHILE
GOVERNMENT "ANXIOUS HAVE VERY CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH
PRESS" AND WOULD "WELCOME CONSTRUCTIVE IDEAS AND CRITICISM."
OBASANJO CALLED ON JOURNALISTS BE "MODERATE AND TEMPERATE
IN THEIR LANGUAGE." INDICATING INCREASING GOVERNMENT
SENSITIVITY TO PRESS CRITICISM, OBASANJO ATTACKED "INTEMPERATE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 LAGOS 08630 081026Z

LANGUAGE BORDERING ON RUDENESS IN COMMENTS ON ACTIVITIES OF

GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONARIES IN ORDINARY ARTICLES AND EVEN IN EDITORIAL COLUMNS." SHOVING THE POINT HOME, OBASANJO SAID "NOBODY SHOULD BE TARGET OF ACCTACK BECAUSE HE HAS JOB TO DO IN WHATEVER CAPACITY IN THE INTEREST THIS COUNTRY."

2. NEXT DAY, SATURDAY AUG 30, CHAIRMAN OF TIMES GROUP ANNOUNCED FMG, THROUGH ITS WHOLLY-OWNED NATIONAL INSURANCE CORPORATION OF NIGERIA, HAD INCREASED EQUITY HOLDINGS IN TIMES FROM 14.9 TO 60 (SIXTY) PER CENT AND THAT TIMES'S BOARD DIRECTORS WOULD BE RECONSTITUTED. MONDAY, SEPT. 1, FMG PROCLAIMED TOTAL ACQUISITION NEW NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS LTD. FROM SIX NORTHERN STATES GOVERNMENTS.

3. FMG JUSTIFIED NEW NIGERIAN TAKEOVER IN TERMS SUCH "WOULD ENABLE PAPER EXPAND ITS ACTIVITIES TO COVER EVEN MORE EFFEC- TIVELY ALL PARTS COUNTRY AND PROVIDE ONE OF MAIN CHANNELS COMMUNICATIONS WITH PUBLIC." FURTHER, STATE GOVERNMENTS WHICH DO NOT HAVE OWN PAPERS COULD NOW PARTICIPATE FEDERALLY OWNED ONES. FMG STATEMENT ADDED IT NOW UNNECESSARY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ESTABLISH ADDITIONAL FEDERAL PAPER WHICH WOULD "ENGAGE IN WASTEFUL COMPETITION WITH TWO LEADING NATIONAL PAPERS."

4. FOLLOWING MONDAY, SEPT. 1, FMG HASTENED PROMISE PRESS FREEDOM. ACQUISITION TIMES AND NEW NIGERIAN WOULD "IN NO MANNER CURTAIL INDEPENDENCE, THESE NEWSPAPERS. STATEMENT CONTINUED " GOVERNMENT WISHES UNDERLINE ITS POLICY FULL SUPPORT FOR PRESS FREEDOM AND ITS OBJECTIVE SERVING NATIONAL INTEREST AT ALL TIMES." STATEMENT ENDED ON LESS PROPITIOUS AND PROBABLY MORE INDICATIVE NOTE: "NEWSPAPERS WILL BE EXPECTED MAKE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISMS IN THEIR COMMENTS" AND " TI HOPED THEY WILL SEE IT NECESSARY SERVE THE NATIONAL INTEREST." ON SEP. 1, ALHAJI JOSE, CHAIRMAN OF TIMES GROUP, INGERRED TO PAO THAT TAKE-OVER MARKED PROBABLY END OF PRESS FREEDOM IN NIGERIA -- "CAUSE FOR WHICH I HAVE WORKED FOR PAST 32 YEARS". HE REMARKED THAT NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA ONLY AFRICAN COUNTRIES WITH HIGH DEGREE OF PRESS FREEDOM. HE INDICATED HE WOULD CONTINUE AS CHAIRMAN AND WOULD ACCOMMODATE TO NEW CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. ON SEPT. 2, TWO LAGOS EDIROTS OF NEW NIGERIAN TOLD INFOR- MATION OFFICER THAT THEY FORESAW EXPANSION OF NIGERIAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 LAGOS 08630 081026Z

CIRCULATION -- PARTICULARLY TO SOUTHEASTERN REGION -- AND GREATER SUBSIDIES UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT. THEY DID NOT EXPRESS GREAT CONCERN ABOUT THREAT TO PRESS FREEDOM, POSSIBLY DUE TO FACT THAT NEW NIGERIAN HAS NEVER BEEN INDEPENDENT COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE.

6. ON SEPT. 4, NEW NIGERIAN EDITORIAL CITED " OMIMMUS RIDER (TO FMG STATEMENT) THAT NEWSPAPER SHOULD, IN THE PUBLIC

INTEREST, OFFER CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM." EDITORIAL CONCLUDED:
"NEW NIGERIAN... INTENDS) TO FOLLOW THE PATH OF CORRECT REPORTING
AND RESPONSIBLE BUT WHERE NECESSARY CRITICAL COMMENT ON NATIONAL
AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS."

7. COMMENT: ACQUISITION NEW NIGERIAN GROUP FROM SIX NORTHERN
STATES CONTROL AND PREVIOUSLY (FOR FIFTY YEARS) INDEPENDENT
TIMES GROUP GIVES FMG CONTROL OF THE TWO NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS
IN THE COUNTRY. ONLY THREE INDEPENDENT DAILIES: TRIBUNE
(MOUTHPIECE FOR AWOLOWO IN WESTERN STATE) AND ANCIENT, SMALL-
CIRCULATION EXPRESS AND WEST AFRICAN PILOT. TAKEOVERS AND
FMG STATEMENTS WOULD APPEAR PRESAGE INCREASED FMG CONTROL OF
PRESS IN NIGERIA AND INTENTION TO MUTE FUTURE CRITICISM OF
NEW REGIME. NEW NIGERIAN EDIT (PARA 7 ABOVE) APPEARS TO BE
FIRST SETP IN ATTEMPTS TO DETERMINE PARAMETERS OF PRESS CONTROL
INTENDED BY NEW REGIME.
EASUM

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NATIONALIZATION, PRESS CONFERENCES, INFORMATION CONTROL, NEWSPAPERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LAGOS08630
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750309-0979
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750985/aaaacwux.tel
Line Count: 132
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LAGOS 8249, 75 LAGOS 8477
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 AUG 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <15 DEC 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FMG MOVES TO CONTROL PRESS: TAKEOVER TWO LARGEST DAILIES
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, NI, (OBASANJO, OLUSEGUN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006